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Classic Strategy
(Classic Custom Vacations' Classic America product line doubled its
  business in 1996, targeting the independent travel market)
Travel Agent, v 285, n 6, p 75-77
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ABSTRACT:
Classic Custom Vacations' Classic America product line, launched in late
1994, doubled its business in both passengers and revenue in 1996,
targeting the independent travel market, according to Lisa Gyermek,
vp/general manager.  Classic America's 1997 brochure has changed, including
having the destinations Seattle and Boston added.  And it now helps agents
presell activities in the destinations featured.  The database has
been augmented by 100+ activities as components for agents to presell.
Many of the most popular components are listed in the brochure; others will
be suggested by reservations agents.  The company is trying to encourage
travel agents to sell entire vacations, says Gyermek.  The Classic strategy
is designed to bring agents into the process of choosing what to do at the
destination.  According to Ron Letterman, pres, Classic Custom Vacations,
the company's product is not the destinations, but how it does business.
Classic is targeting a specialized market that it has clearly delineated:
a traveler wanting a mini-vacation or a traveler wanting to extend a
business trip,  convention or cruise, according to Letterman.

TEXT:
By David Cogswell

Introduced in late 1994, Classic America has now finished its second full
year.  "In 1996 we doubled the business in both passengers and revenue,"
says Lisa Gyermek, vice president and general manager of Classic America.
"We had an exciting year."

Classic America's 1997 brochure has changed.  It now helps agents presell
activities in the destinations featured.  More than 100 activities have
been added into the database as components for agents to presell.
Many of the most popular components are listed in the brochure; others will
be suggested by reservations agents.

"We are trying to encourage travel agents to sell whole vacations," says Gyermek. "The brochure has done a good job selling the whole destination and not just hotels. It's good for agents because it helps to maximize revenues, and it's good for clients not just to wait till they get there to figure out what they're going to do. They can't wait till they get to New York to book a Broadway show. It won't be there."

Agent Input. The Classic strategy is designed to bring agents into the process of choosing what to do at the destination. "Any time anyone takes a vacation, what are they going to do besides stay in their hotel room?" says Terri Lester, vice president-sales. "You do some sightseeing, some activities. We're trying to sell [activities] that are unique, not just run-of-the-mill. We're taking a lot of input from travel agents as far as what is working. We'll change it so it becomes the product they need."

New destinations added to the 1997 brochure are Seattle and Boston. Next year's brochure will add more destinations in Canada, such as Montreal, Toronto and Calgary.

When Classic America was introduced, it joined Classic Hawaii as the second major product line of Classic Custom Vacations. In late 1996, the company rolled out its third major product line, Classic Europe.
According to Ron Letterman, president of Classic Custom Vacations, the company's product is not the destinations, but how it does business. "We sell component-based, customized FIT vacations, and we feature some of the best hotels," he says. "It allows travel agents to offer a customized experience at package prices. I know of other companies that do some of what we do, but no one that does all of what we do."

Classic is targeting a specialized market that it has clearly delineated. "Our core client is a traveler who wants a mini-vacation," says Letterman, "or the traveler who is extending beyond a business trip. It is also people who want extensions to conventions or a cruise. It's usually three to six days. We do full vacations, too, but our real product is long weekends. It's a very big market."

Classic executives are still finding out for themselves the many different ways the new product can be used. "It has become a good product for travel agents east of the Rockies with clients who have stopovers on the way to Hawaii," says Lester. "If they want to stay a few nights on the West Coast, the airlines allow that one stopover. It has become a really big seller."
According to Classic's market research, about 40 percent of business travelers take their families on at least one business trip a year. "We're

covering a terrific need in the industry," says Letterman.

The Classic client is an independent traveler who is comfortable renting a car, and doesn't want to mold his or her schedule to fit that of a group or a preformed itinerary. Classic can use its buying power to package the components for less than they can be purchased independently.

"The total cost of the vacation, if you buy air, hotel and car, is almost always less," says Letterman. "It's much easier, and you have the itinerary in your hand in less than five minutes."

More important than getting the rock-bottom price, says Letterman, is the value that comes from Classic's research and knowledge of the destination. "We have wonderful properties, not normally found by other package operators," he says. "We made a real effort to find the best hotels in every price range."

Classic's properties in New York City, for example, include the high-end Waldorf Astoria and the Plaza. However, also included in the selection is St. Moritz on the Park, an older property that offers one of the city's most exclusive locations at a comparatively low price. "You pay $125 a night staying on Central Park South," says Letterman. "A newer room would be $400 or $500 [per night]."

Classic can offer better deals on its bulk air than a client can get independently in most cases, especially when booking late. Tickets can be purchased with a $33 waiver fee that guarantees the right to change the booking beyond the customary restrictions of the airlines. And there are no commission caps. "Another advantage of selling Classic," says Gyermek, "[is] agents get their commissions up front. When they book through the CRS, the commissions come up to six months later. In some cases agents have to chase them. With Classic you get your commissions when the traveler departs. They get it within a week."

Best Value. The Classic-targeted customer is a client who is not looking for the cheapest price, but the best value.

"We're targeting customers who are well educated, experienced travelers and expect to get the best for what they pay for," says Letterman. "When you offer the best price for the experience you want -- not the cheapest price for the experience you won't put up with -- it's hard to advertise. It doesn't fit into sound bites. But it's what the consumer is asking for. When they say, 'Get me the best price.' they don't want to go to Hawaii for $399 and get the worst room in the worst location. They want the best price for a quality property on the beach."

Newspaper ads that quote a low-ball price that can only be provided for the first few callers creates the false expectation that consumers can get a quality product at that price, says Letterman. "That's why you go to a travel agent," he says. "Otherwise you don't need a travel agent. You can go to a newspaper, the Internet. The agent tells you you don't want that."

Letterman says Classic has a niche to itself. "Other companies start with packages and then customize them," he says. "With Classic, it's created custom from the beginning." It has been a highly successful formula in Hawaii, where Classic began 18 years ago and is still a market leader. Letterman says it is because of Classic's customer-oriented strategy that it has maintained in Hawaii a 30 percent a year growth rate in a flat market.

A 100 percent growth rate in one year impressive, but to Letterman, it's only the beginning. "It's still in its infancy," he says. "It won't mature for four or five years.... It's very much a word-of-mouth type of company. That's the way we've grown, from people having good experiences with us and telling their friends. It puts pressure on us to increase services, or the word doesn't count."

Classic is not in a hurry, preferring to concentrate on establishing the product on a solid foundation.

"We didn't want to go too fast," says Gyermek. "After six months of the first year we started to really promote. We wanted to make sure the operational issues would work out, to make sure we could deliver the same kind of product from a customer-service standpoint as Classic Hawaii. We wanted to work out whatever kinks there were, then go full blown."

Classic's strategy relies on maintaining a high customer-service standard. "What we've done with Classic America is market to agents that already loved doing business with Classic Hawaii," says Gyermek. "We're giving them more product to sell."

Classic sells only through travel agents and considers itself in partnership with those agents. "The travel agent is the customer expert; our job is to be destination experts," says Letterman. "That's the contract. We rely on travel agents to know their customers."
Matching Clients. Gyermek, who formerly worked with Carlson Wagonlit, has seen both sides of the fence. "Most agents don't know all these cities real well," she says. "If they call Classic, we can help them manage the destination, help them match the right property with their client."

Agents who are not customer experts are missing their true function in

today's industry, says Letterman. "That's why quality agents are better than ever while others are getting out of the business," he says. "It's not a transaction business. Your responsibility is to get them through the confusion and to sell them only products and services that you have confidence in and believe in.

"No travel agent can be an expert on everything," Letterman continues. "You have to get more of a dealership mentality. Consumers no longer are looking for information. They have more than ever before. They are looking for someone to help them get through that information. Our product line is designed to do just that. Our whole strategic thrust is to do that."

Classic America Specials

"Phantom of the Opera in San Francisco at Hotel Monaco" -- $227 per person double. Includes two nights' accommodations in a queen canopy room and two orchestra seats to the show.

"Weekend Special at The Mark in New York" -- $295 per person double. Includes two nights' deluxe accommodations, continental breakfast for two daily, a copy of The New York Times and gift upon arrival.

"Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Fourth Night Free Promotion" -- $407 per person double. Includes four nights' accommodations in Orlando, golf clinic, free round of golf with cart and free transportation to Walt Disney World theme parks.

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NCR And Microstrategy Link Technologies And Products to Give Businesses A
Two-Way Connection to Today's Active Consumers
PR Newswire
Wednesday, February 16, 2000 10:33 EST
JOURNAL CODE: PR LANGUAGE: ENGLISH RECORD TYPE: FULLTEXT
DOCUMENT TYPE: NEWSWIRE
WORD COUNT: 985

TEXT:
DAYTON, Ohio, Feb. 16 /PRNewswire/ - NCR Corporation (NYSE: NCR) and
MicroStrategy Incorporated (Nasdaq: MSTR) are pooling their technology
strengths to give businesses a way to build personalized, real-time 21st
century customer relationships that cater to today's active, mobile
consumers.

    By integrating their leading technologies, NCR and MicroStrategy will
bring to market in the second quarter of 2000 an end-to-end solution for
eCRM.
The initial release will be the first in a series of increasingly
integrated
offers.

NCR and MicroStrategy are really putting the power of data warehousing
into the hands of consumers," said Mark Hurd, senior vice president of
NCR's
Teradata Solutions Group. "With this integrated solution, each automated
customer communication -- whether it's an e-mail on the performance of an
investment portfolio or a phone call about a travel schedule -- relies on
customized questions asked about the information in a Teradata(R)
Warehouse."

    "To make this 21st century approach to data warehousing work," Hurd
stated, "both companies bring something to the table. MicroStrategy brings
the intelligent customer interaction channels that give today's on-the-go
consumers easy access to their information, and NCR brings the
next-generation
CRM tools and our powerful Teradata database that can manage the
custom
requirements of millions of consumers."

For example, with this solution, a travel company would be able to contact
thousands of select consumers via their chosen communication channel (cellular
phone, pager, personal digital assistant, e-mail, fax, etc.) to make a special
offer on a particular travel package. Here's how it would work:

-- Using the NCR Relationship Optimizer(TM) suite of marketing
communications software, the travel company could query its Teradata
Active Warehouse to identify customers who had previously purchased
a
sports travel package. The travel company would then
enter a command to
send the selected consumers a custom message if their favorite
teams
qualify for post-season play.

-- The sports fans would then receive notification of a special sports
travel package, including travel and lodging for the upcoming sports
event featuring their favorite team. This message would be delivered
via his or her chosen communication channel (consumers would use the
web-based MicroStrategy InfoCenter(TM) to set their communication
preferences). MicroStrategy Telecaster(TM) and MicroStrategy
Broadcaster(TM) technology would then be used to deliver the message
and provide real-time interaction options such as 'press one to
reserve
your seat at the upcoming tournament game.'

-- Once consumers book the vacation, they could sign up via
Strategy.com,
MicroStrategy's Personal Intelligence Network(TM) to receive
personalized sports updates on their favorite team, as well as
weather
forecasts for their travel destination.

While the real-time interaction of this solution ensures that marketers
are able to contact consumers at the precise moment of decision (while the
fan
is still celebrating the season-clinching win, for example), the built-in
privacy aspect is key to this offer. With MicroStrategy InfoCenter,
consumers
are able to complete a simple Web-based form to sign up for updates and
specify the 'rules of engagement,' including how and why a company can
contact
them. With these rules in place, the company can rely on the

NCR/MicroStrategy
solution to watch for significant events that trigger custom offers.

About the NCR/MicroStrategy Solution
The NCR/MicroStrategy eCRM solution will be built on the foundation of
an
NCR Teradata Active Warehouse and NCR's robust marketing communications
software suite NCR Relationship Optimizer. The NCR software will be
tightly
integrated with MicroStrategy's entire suite of Intelligent E-Business(TM)
products. This suite includes MicroStrategy Intelligence Server(TM),
MicroStrategy Web(TM), MicroStrategy Telecaster(TM),
MicroStrategy Broadcaster(TM), MicroStrategy InfoCenter(TM) and the
Strategy.com(TM) network.

The NCR/MicroStrategy solution is scheduled to be available during the
second quarter of 2000 on UNIX and NT platforms.

Today's announcement marks another milestone in the two companies'
$52.5 million licensing and technology agreement announced late last year.
Under the terms of that agreement, NCR signed a $27.5 million reseller
agreement and MicroStrategy agreed to purchase a Teradata Warehouse worth
$11 million to power Strategy.com. MicroStrategy also agreed to provide
NCR's
future OLAP technology and purchased NCR's TeraCube(TM) business and
related
intellectual property for $14 million in MicroStrategy stock.

About NCR Corporation
NCR Corporation (NYSE: NCR) is a recognized world leader in providing
Relationship Technology(TM) solutions for the retail, financial,
communications, travel and transportation, and insurance markets. NCR's
Relationship Technology solutions include Teradata(R) warehouses, ATMs and
store automation. The company's business solutions are built on the
foundation of its long-established industry knowledge and consulting
expertise, value-adding software, global customer support services, a
complete
line of consumable and media products, and world-leading hardware
technology.
More information about NCR and its solutions may be found at www.ncr.com .

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Telecaster,

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Network are
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NCR and MicroStrategy Incorporated are separate companies and each is
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that
may constitute "forward-looking" statements, usually containing the words
"believe," "estimate," "project," "expect" or similar expressions.
Forward-
looking statements inherently involve risks and uncertainties that could
cause
actual results to differ materially from the forward-looking statements.
Factors that could cause or contribute to such differences include
continued
acceptance of the Company's products in the marketplace, the timing of
significant orders, delays in the Company's ability to develop or ship new
products, market acceptance of new products, competitive factors, general
economic conditions, currency fluctuations, and other risks detailed in the
Company's registration statements and periodic reports filed with the
Securities and Exchange Commission.  By making these forward-looking
statements, the Company undertakes no obligation to update these statements
for revisions or changes after the date of this release.

COMPANY NAMES:  NCR Corporation; MicroStrateg; AT AND T CORP;
MICROSTRATEGY
 INC; MORNINGSTAR GROUP; SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
INDUSTRY NAMES:  COMPUTER SOFTWARE; DATABASE SOFTWARE; MEDIA
 INDUSTRIES; NETWORKS; SPORTS; COMPUTERS; DATABASES;
INFORMATION
 MANAGEMENT; COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES; DATA
COMMUNICATIONS; LEISURE
EVENT NAMES:  TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

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Telecaster,
MicroStrategy InfoCenter, MicroStrategy Intelligence Server, MicroStrategy
Web, MicroStrategy Agent, Strategy.com, and Personal Intelligence
Network are
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...INDUSTRY NAMES:  DATABASE SOFTWARE

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New Leisure Guidelines: The Fodor's-Worldview venture can generate more
  business for agents
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BY DOUGLAS FINLAY
     NEW YORK - The recently announced venture between Fodor's Travel
Publications and Worldview Systems may benefit agents as much as the
parties. The business enterprise adds credence and prestige to Worldview's
destination database products and places the publishing firm on the
road toward electronic dissemination of its product line. Travel agents who
utilize it can expect an increase in leisure business that will come
directly from their corporate clients and will have opportunities to gain
new corporate business and convert many walk-ins on the leisure side.
     The product, a just-in-time document called Worldview Travel Update,
is a 'customized events update personalized to customers' interests,'
says Kristina Peterson, publisher of Fodor's Travel Publications.
Worldview, she continues, will act as the database for Fodor's
travel guides, which offer a wealth of information about things
to do and sights to see at a destination.
     'We want to distribute our travel guides over electronic media, and
getting them into agencies over databases is an excellent start because
travel agents have always wanted the information that's available in them,'
she says.
     Neal Checkoway, vice president-marketing for Worldview, says the
venture is designed to create a marketing umbrella for agents to offer
value-added services, such as 'local perspective' of the destination the
traveler is going to. 'People are coming to expect more destination
information from their travel agents,' he says.
     With more destination information available, agents can 'win more
business and do more effective cold calling,' contends Checkoway. On the
leisure side, he says, the travel update product could 'convert walk-ins by
impressing them with the knowledge agents possess about many destinations.'
     Worldview's destination databases combined with Fodor's travel update
will help keep agent's corporate clients with them once they plan
their family leisure itineraries. 'More and more we are seeing our

corporate clients stay with us by going over to our leisure department,' says Bob Ellsasser, executive vice president of Accent Travel in Austin, Texas, whose agency uses Worldview's Automated TripPlanner software.

Destination databases are a subtle way of advertising or marketing an agency without having to pay for it, he adds.

Marti Fox, director of special services at Campbell Travel in Dallas, says the agency, which also uses Worldview's TripPlanner software, has never had to advertise its leisure section. 'Now we have a corporate leisure section for executives who come to us for leisure travel, which we never had before,' he notes.

The Worldview Travel Update is designed to be printed at the agency site. It is ideally suited for booklet form, although Worldview is developing the printing technology to ultimately implement at agency sites for booklet printing. 'Making the presentation of information as appealing as possible through booklet form is the goal,' asserts Checkoway. He says the firm will provide the necessary printer drivers (software) for laser printers as part of the package when it becomes available. For now, customized itineraries are printed on an agency's letterhead in 8 1/2' x 11' format, with trip jackets provided.

Monthly updates of destination information are provided via floppy disks. 'We have 130 categories and 170 destinations at present on our database, but with Fodor's we will be able to add many more destinations and categories to it, such as bed and breakfasts and cities in Africa and the Far East,' says Checkoway.

Only certain clients - such as frequent corporate travelers and leisure travelers - need to receive the customized travel update. After an itinerary is developed, TripPlanner software runs in the background to check the PNR record of the traveler once specific parameters have been loaded into the software, such as which passengers should receive the check, or certain city destinations that would automatically create a PNR check. Says Ellsasser: 'For corporate travelers, we'll put in additional category checks such as location of faxes, secretarial services available in proximity to the hotel and types of transportation available to the airport.'

With the joint venture now under way, agents will be able to print out the travel update on their office printers using agency letterhead. It will include the latest Fodor's information about events going on in the destination city, descriptions of shows and other entertainment, what restaurants are close by and other just-in-time information.

'Combining the two destination data-bases makes a tremendous amount of sense,' concludes Ellsasser. 'It's a gargantuan job to stay atop all the destination information that's needed today.'

CD-ROM would be an ideal distribution mechanism for the destination databases, 'but there is not enough high penetration of CD drives in the travel industry at present,' says Checkoway. For now, however, getting Fodor's sought-after destination information by floppy disk to agents to

print out as an update will greatly enhance the agents' ability to capture
new leisure business - especially from corporate clients.

PUBLISHER NAME: Universal Media, Inc.
COMPANY NAMES: *Worldview Systems Corp.
EVENT NAMES: *180 (Organizational classification)
GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: *1USA (United States)
PRODUCT NAMES: *7375930 (Reservation Services)
INDUSTRY NAMES: BUSN (Any type of business); TRVL (Travel and
  Hospitality)
NAICS CODES: 561599 (All Other Travel Arrangement and Reservation
  Services)
SPECIAL FEATURES: COMPANY

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